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ISLAM IN THE INDIAN SUBCONTINENT

ANNEMARIE SCHIMMEL



E. J. BRILL / LEIDEN-KÖLN / 1980

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as one of the 'martyrs of love'. Followers of Shams are still found in the area from Multan to Dera Ghazi Khan in the West, Bahawalpur in the south east, and although the Shamsi, like many Isma'ili factions, have maintained a number of Hindu customs, they belong to the fold of the Agha Khan. It has been suggested that the *rawāfiẓ*, about whom Feroz Shah complained in the late 14th century and whom he mercilessly persecuted, may have been followers of Pir Shams; that is possible since the Twelver Shia at that moment did not yet play a major political role, while the various Isma'ili groups always attracted the hatred of the Sunni community.

The most outstanding *dā'ī* was Pir Sadraddin, who is buried near Ucch and belongs to the first decades of the 15th century. It is he who is credited with the conversion of the Sindhi Lohanas to Islam, and the new converts received the title of *khwāja*, hence the soubriquet of the sect, *khōja*. Pir Sadr also institutionalized the tithe of the *imām*, which is collected by the *mukhlī*, a highly trusted person; and more importantly, he is regarded as the first author of the genre of literary works known as *Das avatār*, in which a most amazing blending of Islamic and Hindu ideas is found—the author explains to his Hindu audience that the long awaited tenth *avatār* of Vishnu has appeared in the West and is nobody but 'Alī. The Prophet Muhammad, then, is equated with Brahma.

Pir Sadr also founded the first *jamā'atkhāna*, an institution that is central for the worship and community life of the Khojas; its name is reminiscent of the early community centres of the Chishti Sufis. Indeed, the relations between the Sufis of Sind and Gujarat and the Isma'ilis were probably much closer than could be established until now. The *ginans*, the religious literature of the Isma'ilis, whose earliest specimens may go back to Pir Sadr's time, are very close in tenor to Sindhi and Gujarati mystical folk songs; the imagery is similar (the woman-soul, bridal symbolism, etc.), and the first devotional *ginans* may form a bridge between Muslim mystical poetry in the regional languages and Hindu *bhajans*.

Pir Sadraddin was succeeded by his son Hasan Kabiruddin who also died in Ucch. Among his 18 sons the youngest one, Imam Shah, settled in Gujarat where he was favourably received as a pious Sufi by Mahmud Begra, who gave him one of his daughters in marriage. Imam Shah died in **Pirana** in 1512, and at his death a major schism occurred. One of his sons from a Rajput wife settled in Burhanpur, which became an important centre of the new Imam-shahi group who called themselves *Satpanthīs*, 'those who follow the true path'. The tithe was no longer paid to the main *dā'ī* but to the descendants of Imam Shah. In this branch the Hinduization went so far as the regard Imam Shah as an incarnation of Indra, while his son, Nur Muhammad Shah, was



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taken for Vishnu's incarnation. Their literature, too, is a most unusual symbiosis of Hinduism and Islam so that in some works Bibi Fatima, the Prophet's daughter, is equated with Lakshmi, Bibi Asa (Muhammad's youngest wife, 'A'isha, otherwise loathed by the Shiites) corresponds to Savitri, while Adam is Mahadeo or Ishvara. In the major Satpanthi *Das avatār* work Pir Shams is shown as assuming the form of a parrot (the typical bird of wisdom in Indian tradition) who converts the consort of a demon to the true *satpanth*, and fantastic tales are spun around the figures of the Indian *dā's*. The *Satpanthī mōmins*, as they are also called, have quite a few special customs at marriage and other festivities, but some branches have lately become more 'Islamicized'.

Another branch of the Khojas was that of Pir Masha'ikh in the second half of the 17th century, who has also a Sunni *silsila* going back to Mu'īnuddin Chishtī, while most of his followers are Shiites. Smaller groups in various shades of religious synthesis are found in the Sind, Gujarat and Cutch areas from where many families migrated lately to East and South Africa. It is worth mentioning that the Nizari Khojas do not follow the Fatimid code of law as do the Bohoras, but rather have a customary law that incorporates many Hindu elements.

A new chapter in the history of the Khoja community begins with the advent of the Agha Khan from Iran in Sind in 1840 (see p. 171, 214).

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